

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

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AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
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AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
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C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 3114

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: UN, CE

SUBJ: WELLS/PETREE DISCUSSIONS WITH SRI LANKAN OFFICIALS ON
HUMAN RIGHTS

1. IN LENGTHY MEETINGS ON AUGUST 24, AMBASSADOR WELLS AND PETREE HAD FRUITFUL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON HUMAN RIGHTS WITH MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, A.C.S. HAMEED, AND WITH OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. WHILE SRI LANKANS WERE GENERALLY SYMPATHETIC TO US POSITION, SUPPORTING HUMAN RIGHTS IN PRINCIPLE, THEY WERE NON-COMMITTAL ON SUPPORT FOR SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FOR POSSIBLE US INITIATIVES ON HUMAN RIGHTS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE UN. THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS SEEMED UNEXPECTEDLY WELL PREPARED FOR THESE DISCUSSIONS AND DISPLAYED MORE INTEREST AND KNOWLEDGE OF CURRENT ISSUES IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS THAN HE HAD AT EARLIER MEETINGS WITH AMBASSADOR WRIGGINS.

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2. WELLS AND PETREE DESCRIBED FIRM US COMMITMENTS TO HUMAN RIGHTS AND OUTLINED CONTEMPLATED US INITIATIVES FOR 32ND UNGA DESIGNED TO GET BEYOND MERE RHETORIC AND TO START IMPLEMENTING MOVEMENT TOWARD RECOGNITION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. SPECIFICALLY, THEY TOOK SOUNDINGS ON SRI LANKA'S REACTION TO THE ESTABLISHING OF A UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

AND A UN GROUP FOR MONITORING AND RECEIVING COMPLAINTS OF TORTURE. HAMEED VOICED SEVERAL CONCERNS, RAISING ISSUES OF NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AND JURISDICTION AND OF VARYING NATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS. REACTIONS TO HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT, HE OPINED, WILL DEPEND LARGELY ON HOW INDIVIDUAL NATIONS DEFINE HUMAN RIGHTS IN THEIR OWN CIRCUMSTANCES AND HOW THEY WILL VIEW ANY "GENTLE REMINDERS" FROM OUTSIDE THAT THEY ARE VIOLATING THOSE RIGHTS. WHERE, HE ASKED, DOES A COUNTRY'S SOVEREIGNTY AND DUTY TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER WITHIN ITS BOUNDARIES BEGIN? WHAT IS A DEFINITION OF A VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ONE COUNTRY MAY BE AN EXERCISE OF A RIGHTFUL DUTY IN ANOTHER. HE SAID THAT SOME COUNTRIES VIEW THE HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT AS MERELY AN ATTEMPT TO PEEP THROUGH THE IRON CURTAIN AND TO EMBARRASS COUNTRIES.

3. US DELEGATES EXPLAINED NEED FOR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP BY MANY NATIONS IN DEVELOPING AWARENESS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM AND OF THE NEED TO DEVELOP A BROAD DEFINITION OF FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS ACCEPTABLE TO ALL NATIONS. THIS IS THE RATIONALE FOR DEVELOPING MECHANISMS WITHIN A MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATION SUCH AS THE UN TO LOOK INTO HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS AND REPORTS OF TORTURE. THEY CONCEDED THAT THERE IS INDEED A LIMIT TO INFRINGEMENT ON NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY BUT THAT MUCH CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED TO REACH SOLUTIONS TO THESE PROBLEMS THROUGH SPEAKING OUT AND THROUGH DIPLOMATIC ENCOURAGEMENT. US PRESENTATION ENDED WITH STATEMENT OF HOW CONFIDENTIAL

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THE US IS NOW SAYING AND WILL CONTINUE TO SPEAK OUT IN NON-POLEMICAL, EVEN-HANDED MANNER WHERE HUMAN RIGHTS ARE CONCERNED. US IS TAKING INITIATIVES AND IS APPEALING FOR SUPPORT FOR THESE NEW IDEAS AND ACTIONS.

4. OTHER GSL OFFICIALS RAISED QUESTION OF POSSIBLE BACKLASH TO FORCEFUL HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVES, CITING US PROBLEMS WITH USSR AND LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES. HAS HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTION SOURED RELATIONS WITH SOME COUNTRIES TO THE POINT OF LIMITING THE POSSIBILITIES FOR SOLUTIONS TO PERHAPS MORE CRITICAL PROBLEMS, SUCH AS MAINTAINING DETENTE WITH THE SOVIETS? THEY ALSO CITED CONSTRAINTS IMPOSED ON SRI LANKA'S ACTIONS BY ITS BEING A MEMBER AND CHAIRMAN OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT. NOT ALL NON-ALIGNED MEMBERS SEE NEED FOR PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE SAME LIGHT AS SRI LANKA OR INDIA. PROBLEM FOR SRI LANKA IS THAT IT HAS TO WORK WITHIN INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS SUCH AS THE NAM. WHILE IT CAN SUBSCRIBE TO THE PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN RIGHTS, IT STILL HAS TO BALANCE THAT AGAINST ACHIEVING ITS OWN INTERESTS WITHIN THE GROUPS IN WHICH IT IS WORKING.

5. US SIDE ACKNOWLEDGED SOVIET REACTION TO CALL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS WAS SOMEWHAT SURPRISING, BUT POINTED OUT THAT US VOICE

ON THIS IS MODERATE, BALANCED, AND AIMED AT LONG-RANGE METHODS OF DEALING WITH HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM. THEY ASSURED GSL OFFICIALS THAT US COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS IS FIRM AND IRREVOCABLE.

6. IN SUBSEQUENT DINNER CONVERSATION WITH MINISTER OF FINANCE DE MEL, AMBASSADOR WELLS DISCUSSED SRI LANKA'S LONG COMMITMENT AND PRACTICE OF THE BASIC HUMAN NEEDS APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT. COUPLED WITH DRAMATIC RESULTS OF RECENT ELECTIONS SRI LANKA NOW SEEMED TO SOME OF US WATCHING FROM THE OUTSIDE TO BE IN A RATHER UNIQUE POSITION, THAT IS, A DEVELOPING COUNTRY COMMITTED IN THEORY AND THROUGH PRACTICE TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BROAD DEFINITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS - BOTH ECONOMIC AND PRACTICAL. IN VIEW OF SRI LANKA'S LEADERSHIP POSITION IN THE NAM, AM-
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BASSADOR WELLS EXPRESSED HOPE THAT SRI LANKA IN DUE TIME MIGHT EXERT LEADING ROLE ON THIS FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE. MINISTER GAVE NO COMMITMENT, EXCEPT TO NOTE THAT DESPITE SETBACKS, GSL WOULD CONTINUE ITS BASIC NEEDS APPROACH.
WRIGGINS

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